MIAMIBEACH

LETTER TO COMMISSION 322-2012

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE: December 11, 2012

SUBJECT: **MASS TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY**

The purpose of this Letter to Commission is to provide an update on the City's ongoing efforts to improve mass transit connectivity between Miami Beach and the mainland since the Finance and Citywide Projects (FCWP) Committee meeting held on July 10, 2012 wherein this item was discussed. Discussions regarding the Bay Link Project have been in consideration for some time, with a discussion item placed on the Commission agenda by Commissioner Gongora in June 2010. The discussion was not heard, but in May 2012, the item was discussed at the Commission retreat. At that time, it was recommended that since there was a funding consideration, it should be discussed as part of the FCWP Committee meetings on budget in July. A copy of the agenda item from that meeting is attached.

At the meeting, City staff made a brief presentation on a modern electric streetcar system operated by FEVE, a Spanish rail entity operating approximately 777 miles of rail service in various parts of Spain, including a catenary-free modern streetcar system within historic Seville. The FCWP Committee directed City staff to establish contact with FEVE to discuss the possibility of conducting a feasibility analysis that would evaluate the viability of applying a catenary-free technology in the context of the Bay Link Project, a bi-directional streetcar system proposed to connect and circulate within the cities of Miami and Miami Beach. The Bay Link Study was conducted under the auspices of the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in 2004. The project did not move forward due to lack of funding and political support at the County level at that time as well as some outstanding concerns related to noise, vibration, and the proliferation of overhead catenary wires throughout the City's historic South Beach district..

City staff met with a FEVE official on October 24, 2012. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to provide FEVE with all the historical documents prepared by the MPO for the Baylink project and to discuss an action plan for a preliminary study - based on the refined locally preferred alternative from the Bay Link Study - that would evaluate the feasibility of a catenary-free streetcar system connecting Miami Beach to the mainland and providing circulator service within the City. As a result of that initial meeting, FEVE has completed its literature review of the Bay Link studies and submitted a draft scope of services for a pre-feasibility study that would include the technical and financial viability of a catenary-free streetcar system in the City. The objectives of the pre-feasibility study are as follows:

- To define and develop the technical specifications required for the operation of a catenary-free streetcar system in Miami Beach.
- To develop a preliminary financial feasibility study for the streetcar project.
- To identify all potential funding sources available to the City for the capital, operations, maintenance, and financing of the proposed streetcar system.
- To identify economic development opportunities associated with the proposed streetcar system, including compatibility with land use policies and transportation goals.
- To identify social and environmental benefits, including improving safety, mobility, and

quality-of-life.

At this time, City staff is reviewing the draft scope of services recently submitted by FEVE. A meeting has been scheduled with FEVE for Friday, December 14, 2012 to discuss the scope of services, fee proposal, and next steps, should the City wish to proceed with the feasibility study.

NEXT STEPS

Following the December 14th meeting with FEVE, City staff will provide an update to the Commission on the progress of the discussions. In addition, an update on this item will be presented to FCWP Committee in early 2013 for discussion and further direction prior to any formal engagement of FEVE to commence a feasibility study.

Should a feasibility study find that a catenary-free streetcar system connecting Miami and Miami Beach is viable, City staff will recommend that more detailed technical and financial studies be conducted to further develop a streetcar project. The City will coordinate the additional efforts closely with the Miami-Dade MPO, the Board responsible for short range and long range transportation planning in Miami-Dade County. Currently, the Bay Link project is a Priority IV Unfunded Project in the Miami-Dade MPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). After the feasibility study is completed and the City Commission wishes to pursue a new mass transit project, the City Administration will work through the MPO process to identify funding for the additional planning and engineering studies in the MPO Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program and to submit a new project to the MPO for inclusion in the LRTP. At this time, the MPO is initiating the year-long process to update the LRTP to the year 2040, and the City will be actively engaged in LRTP Update process via representation on the LRTP Advisory Committee.

City staff firmly believes that premium mass transit connectivity between Miami Beach and the mainland is vital to the economic and environmental sustainability of our City. As such, please be assured that the City will be engaged and take a proactive stance on this important transportation project.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Attachment:
FCWP Committee Agenda Item from July 10, 2012 including photos of FEVE-operated catenary-free streetcar in historic Seville

KGB/JGG/FHB/JJF/RWS/JRG

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City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance and Citywide Projects Committee

FROM: Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City manager

DATE: July 9, 2012

SUBJECT: **MASS TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY STUDY**

This item was briefly discussed at the Commission retreat held on May 18, 2012 and referred to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee. The below information is provided to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee for discussion and further direction.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to adopted policies, goals, and objectives in the Transportation Element of the City's 2025 Comprehensive Plan, the City coordinates closely with Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) to ensure that transit service within the South Beach, Middle Beach, and North Beach communities improves mobility and promotes the use of alternative modes of public transit while preserving the historic character of the community.

The City Administration works closely with Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on various short term bus transit projects and initiatives in order to provide residents and visitors traveling in our City with an efficient public mass transportation system that offers safe, convenient, reliable, and accessible transit service and connections. However, a long-term visionary approach is needed to ensure the transportation demands of the future are met.

At this time, there is renewed interest, increasing demand, and new options for additional mass transit connections between the City and other parts of the County. In addition, new technology eliminates overhead catenary wires that were one of the concerns of the most recent potential mass transit connections – Bay Link.

Bay Link Transit Project

In 2004, the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) completed the Miami-Miami Beach Transportation Corridor Study, also known as Bay Link. The Bay Link study consisted of an approximately eighteen (18) mile long bi-directional loop route utilizing the Mac Arthur Causeway, Washington Avenue, Alton Road, 17th Street, and Dade Boulevard corridors. The estimated capital cost of the Bay Link LPA was $482.7 million and the annual operating and maintenance cost was estimated to be $12.1 million in 2004 dollars.

On September 8, 2003, during a Special Commission Meeting, the Miami Beach City Commission, by a four-to-three vote, approved the streetcar mode and bi-directional loop route, with some route

implementing segregated managed lanes with all day variable pricing on existing un-tolled highways (such as the I-395/Mac Arthur Causeway and the I-195/Julia Tuttle Causeway). The study will evaluate the potential of using new revenues generated by the tolled managed lanes/facilities to fund the capital, operating, and maintenance costs of implementing enhanced or express bus services or other type of premium transit, such as light rail.

Traditional strategies of adding more roadway capacity on our major highways and more buses on our local street network are not only unaffordable, they are most often adversely impactful, time consuming to implement, and do not solve the transportation problem in an effective manner. If we continue to follow the same approach as in the past, congestion will only continue to worsen becoming more intense and for longer periods of time. The current condition and approach has and will continue to have a disproportionate impact on lower income travelers who typically do not have a choice and must rely on slow-moving street-running bus service.

It is time that we address the current and expanding transportation problem in our City with a new, expedited, financially and environmentally sustainable approach. Toll managing the Mac Arthur Causeway and/or Julia Tuttle Causeway can be financially self-supporting for an enhanced bus service or light rail transit and represents an equitable approach to providing travel options for everyone. A toll-managed Mac Arthur Causeway and/or Julia Tuttle Causeway, for example, can be used to alter travel behavior and patterns by mode, by facility, and by time of day. Implementation of toll managed facilities would have very limited adverse impacts to the human and natural environment while over long-term they could result in fewer adverse impacts than the alternative of doing more of the same. Tolled managed highway facilities are an innovative, lower cost alternative to traditional highway construction that can offer a variety of travel options for avoiding congestion, maintaining a congestion-free alternative 24/7.

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Re-evaluate a light rail transit/streetcar project to connect Miami Beach to the Mainland. This alternative would entail revisiting the Bay Link Transit Study and reevaluating the Refined Locally Preferred Alternative in the context of applying new state-of-the-art technologies for propulsion systems, such as that currently in use by FEVE in Spain, that do not require the proliferation of overhead catenary wires throughout the City and minimize noise and vibration effects.

2. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a cross-Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. This alternative would explore opportunities for BRT operation along the general-use lanes and shoulders of the Mac Arthur Causeway and/or Julia Tuttle Causeway. A BRT mode would require signal pre-emption that would serve as a "queue jumper" and allow the BRT vehicles to proceed through signalized intersections without stopping.

Although the consideration of these options can be done at different stages, a comprehensive look at the link between the City and the mainland would explore the feasibility of both alternatives. This study would look at both options using a range of service oriented and financial criteria while exploring the new vehicle technology that was not available in the 2004 Bay Link Study. In an effort to enhance the transit connection between Miami Beach and the mainland, the administration would go through extensive coordination with Miami-Dade MPO, Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The coordination with local agencies would facilitate the process since the study requirements would not be as labor intensive as those required by the

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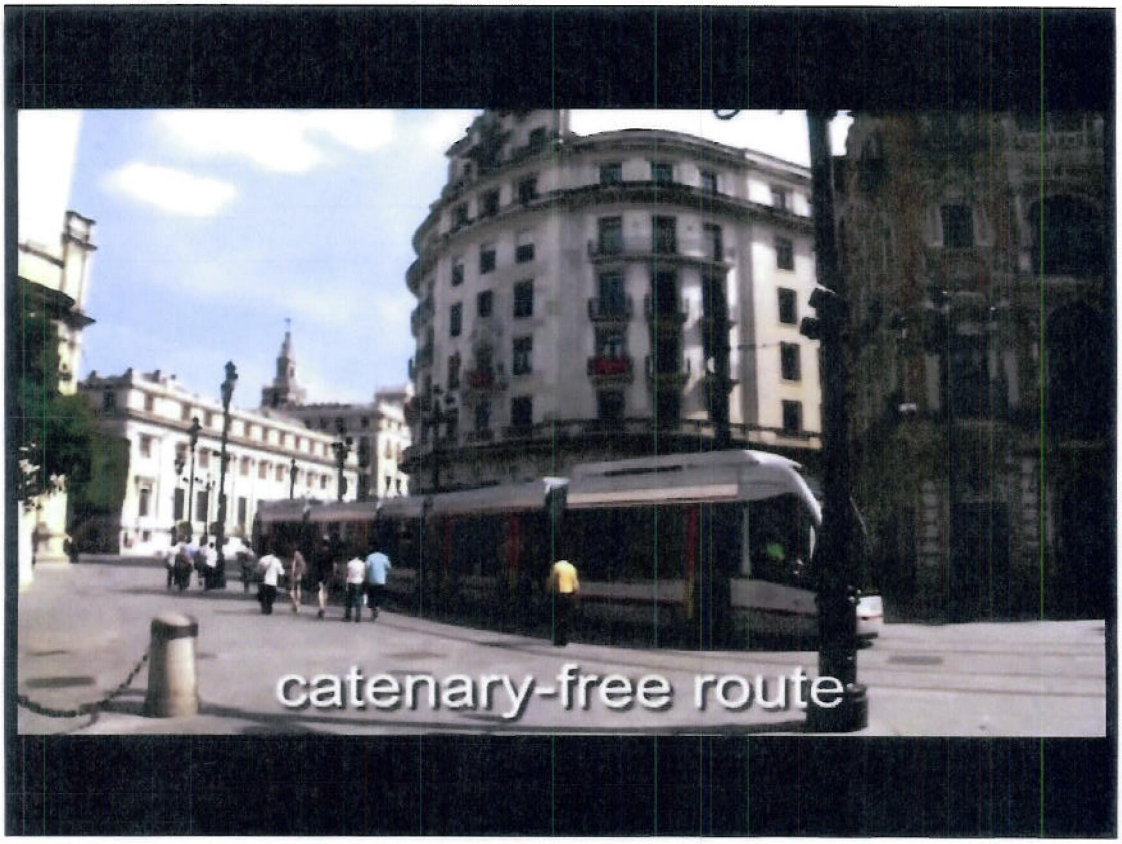
CATENARY FREE TRAMWAY


catenary-free route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